

Warsaw, 2-13 October 2006 OSCE
Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Tuesday, 10.10.2006
Fundamental Freedoms I
Presentation of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe

Dear President,
Dear Commissioners and Non Governmental Organization Delegates
Distinguished Guests,

My name is Özkan Reşit. I represent Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe which is the roof federation of 29 associations established by the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members living in Europe. We endeavour to solve our members' problems that are due to immigration. Beyond this aim, we are occupied to gain the basic human and democratic rights of our minority members living in Western Thrace and help them during their just as well as legitimate struggle to become equal citizens. I would like to give good news that we became a member of United Nations Economic and Social Council and we have the right to attend all meetings with representative status as of July.

European Continent where the best practices in means of human rights are experienced and the driving force of those practices is the European Union. My country Greece inspite of her 25 year European Union membership stands as the worst example in means of human rights implementations considering the case of Western Thrace Turkish Minority members.

I would like to talk about the violation of organizational rights. These rights constitute of education, religious, political, citizenship rights as well as the right to establish foundations and economical rights.

Organizational rights are limited by the ethnical identities with which Greek nationalism has conflicts. Turkish and Macedonian identities compose the limit of the organizational rights in Greece. Xanthi Turkish Solidarity Union, established in 1924, Komotini Turkish Youth Union, established in 1928 and Western Thrace Turkish Teachers Union, established in 1936, were formally closed by Greek authorities due to „Turk“ component in their association names in 1984. Rodop Women's Culture Association can not get founding permission due to „Turk“ component in its association name since 2001. Xanthi Turkish Solidarity Union and Rodop Women's Culture Association prosecute Greece at European Human Rights Court.

Our country, Greece, is too sensible about the usage of Turkish Identity on public platforms that she prefers to use „Muslim minority“ conceptualization by basing on Lausanne Peace Treaty also by rejecting „Turkish Identity“. According to the latest study of The Research Centre on Multilingualism (RCM) at University of Brussel, 80% of Western Thrace Turkish Minority members – we should consider that 80 percentage does not reflect the whole number while some of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members hesitate to reveal their real identity of Turkish-believe strongly in that Greece gives high effort to destroy Turkish Identity and takes on actions to realize that aim. Pomak Research Center in Komotini conflicts with Lausanne Peace Treaty but Greek authorities blink at the existence of so called Pomak Research Center.

Lingual necessity and conditions of the date determined the description of identity in the framework of Lausanne Peace Treaty and such a identity description conflicts not only with sociology but also with human rights. If we are guided by legal descriptions, Greece wrote „Turkish“ into the papers of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members during population exchange in 1925 and the treaty that shaped that population exchange was named „Exchange of Turkish and Greek Folks“. By a administrative act in 1950, all the nameplates of the minority schools were demanded to be changed. The nameplates on which „Muslim Schools“ were written, were demanded to be exchanged with the ones on which „Turkish School“ were written. Until 1967, minority members could live with their identity without any serious problem. With military coup, ethnic identity proble was on the agenda and today’s situation still reflect the signs of military coup’s undemocratic implementations. Democracy came to my country, Greece, in 1974 and we wish that democracy to reach our Western Thrace Turkish Minority members with a time lag of 30 years. We wish human rights violations will come to an end as soon as possible and we expect your support in that democratization process. Tomorrow may be too late.

I would like to thank you for listening to me....